

REMARKS

In response to the Office Action mailed July 24, 2007, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration. To further the prosecution of this application, amendments have been made in the claims, and each of the rejections set forth in the Office Action has been carefully considered and is addressed below. The claims as presented are believed to be in condition for allowance.

Claims 1-41 were previously pending in this application. Claims 1, 15 and 29 are amended herein. No claims have been added or cancelled. As a result, claims 1-41 remain pending for examination, with claims 1, 15 and 29 being independent. No new matter has been added.

Telephone Interview With Examiner

Applicant's representatives thank Examiner Debnath for the courtesies extended in granting and conducting a telephone interview on October 23, 2007. The substance of the interview is summarized herein.

During the interview, Applicant's representatives provided an overview of one embodiment of the invention, which is directed to facilitating the execution of context sharing applications in an environment with a less than fully-enabled context manager. By way of background, Applicant's representatives described context management systems in general. Specifically, Applicant's representatives explained that in certain settings, users may employ and provide input to multiple applications relating to a common set of entities, or "subjects" (p. 1, lines 9-10). For example, in the healthcare field, a user may provide input relating to a particular patient to multiple applications (e.g., one or more clinical applications, financial applications, etc.) (p. 1, lines 10-14). Before context management systems were developed, when a user switched from one application to another, the user was forced to repeat the entry of data relating to the patient to each application (p. 1, lines 14-15). Context management systems enable applications to share data relating to one or more subjects, so that the user need not re-enter data relating to the subject(s) to each application. Rather, the user need only switch to the patient

within one application, and have the context management system effect that change for all applications that share the patient subject (p. 2, lines 5-8).

Data describing the subject(s) shared by applications is referred to as a “context” shared by the applications (p. 4, lines 8-10). Although the patient subject is an illustrative example, applications may share context defined by any of numerous other subjects as well, or instead (p. 1, lines 15-19). For example, applications may share a context defined by the user subject to enable “single sign-on” capabilities, so that a user who logs in to a single application is automatically given access to other applications that share the user subject (p. 1, lines 15-19). Other subjects in the healthcare field include encounter, clinical provider, observation, insurer, etc. (p. 1, lines 15-19). Other subjects may be shared in non-healthcare fields (p. 1, lines 15-19).

A context management system may include a context manager which manages the context for multiple context participant applications (p. 2, lines 23-24). Each of the applications may include programmed routines enabling communication with the context manager (p. 3, lines 25-29). This communication may occur in accordance with a context management specification (e.g., the CCOW standard, which defines processes for managing information on a given subject across a range of healthcare-related applications) (p. 1, lines 12-28). When a user of one of the applications wishes to change the context (e.g., by changing the data for a subject, such as by switching from one patient to another in the application), the application sends a request to the context manager (p. 4, lines 3-7), which may communicate with other applications in determining whether to change the context (p. 4, line 8-p. 5, line 4).

Applicant has appreciated that in certain commercial environments, it can be advantageous to offer customers the option of purchasing a context management system which enables sharing of only a subset of subjects defined by a particular context management specification (e.g., the CCOW standard) (p. 7, lines 6-11). For example, some customers may wish to purchase a system which allows sharing of only the user subject (e.g., to enable single sign-on capability) and not others (p. 7, lines 12-15). Other customers may wish to purchase a system that enables sharing of all subjects except for the user subject (e.g., patient, encounter,

etc.), because they do not wish to pay more for a single sign-on capability (p. 7, lines 15-18).

Applicant has also appreciated that if the applications in a computing environment are configured to share all subjects defined by a context management specification, but the context manager is configured to not enable the sharing of all subjects, the applications could malfunction, because they are incapable of communicating with the context manager in the manner they expect (p. 8, lines 3-9). For example, an application configured to share all subjects may request at startup that the context manager provide it with privileges relating to the user subject (p. 8, lines 21-26). If the context manager is configured to not enable sharing of the user subject (e.g., because the customer did not purchase the single sign-on functionality), it may not provide an indication of privileges for the user subject to the application (p. 8, lines 21-26). This can create problems, because the application may expect to receive an indication of all relevant privileges, including those relating to the user subject (p. 8, lines 26-28). When the application does not receive the indication, it may not function properly (e.g., it may not perceive itself as having the authority to allow a user to log in) (p. 8, line 28-p. 9, line 2).

Accordingly, one embodiment of the invention provides techniques for managing context in an environment where the context manager is configured to not enable the sharing of all subjects defined by a context management specification (p. 7, lines 18-21). In one embodiment, an interface is provided which enables applications to set values for a subject which is not shared (in the example given in the paragraph above, the user subject), but maintains information relating to the unshared subject separately for each application, so that the information is not shared by the applications (p. 10, lines 14-17). As such, the interface allows applications to communicate with the context manager in the manner they expect and thus function properly, but prevents the sharing of an unshared subject (p. 11, lines 4-6).

One illustrative embodiment is described in Applicant's specification with reference to FIG. 2, which depicts an environment wherein context manager 305 facilitates a sharing of context between applications 301 and 303 (p. 9, lines 11-14). In this example, context manager 305 is configured to enable the sharing of the user subject, but not the patient subject (p. 9, lines

16-18). Context manager 305 provides an interface which allows applications 301 and 303 to set and get values for the patient subject, but maintains the values separately for each application, so that the patient subject is not shared between the applications (p. 10, lines 14-17). Specifically, context manager 305 maintains a first set of patient information 313a for application 301 and a second set of patient information 313b for application 303 (p. 10, lines 19-22). When application 301 seeks to set the patient subject (as shown at 315), only portion 313a is updated, and when application 303 seeks to set the patient subject (as shown at 317), only portion 313b is updated (p. 10, lines 22-24). In this manner, information relating to the patient subject is maintained separately for each of applications 301 and 303, allowing each of the applications to set values for the subject as expected, and continue to operate normally (p. 11, lines 4-6).

The foregoing overview is provided to assist the Examiner in appreciating some applications for various aspects of the invention. However, as this overview may not apply to each of the independent claims, and the language of the independent claims may differ in material respects from the overview above, Applicant respectfully requests that careful consideration be given to the language of each independent claim and that each be addressed on its own merits, without relying on the overview above. In this respect, Applicants do not rely on this overview to distinguish any of the claims over the prior art, but rely only upon the arguments provided in the sections that follow.

After the above overview was provided, the discussion turned to the language of independent claims 1, 15 and 29. In this respect, after hearing the overview, the Examiner indicated an appreciation for the manner in which embodiments of the invention distinguish over the prior art of record, but suggested that some amendments to the independent claims may further clarify the distinctions. For example, the Examiner suggested that limitations be moved from the preamble to the body of these claims. Independent claims 1, 15 and 29 have been so amended.

The Examiner also suggested adding a limitation directed to the interface communicating with an application when the application seeks to set a subject for which the context manager is

not configured to enable context sharing. Each of independent claims 1, 15 and 29 has been so amended.

These amendments, and the manner in which each independent claim distinguishes over the prior art of record, are discussed further below.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Independent claims 1, 15 and 29 are rejected under §103 as purportedly being obvious over PCT publication WO00/59286 to Seliger (“Seliger”) (which is commonly assigned with the present application) in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,974,389 to Clark et al. (“Clark”). Claims 1, 15 and 29 are amended herein, and clearly distinguish over the prior art of record.

A. Claims 1-14

As amended herein, claim 1 recites a method for use in a computer system comprising a plurality of applications and a context manager (CM) to manage context sharing between the plurality of applications. The method, for facilitating execution of the plurality of applications, comprises acts of: (a) providing an interface between the CM and the plurality of applications, each of the plurality of applications being configured to share at least first and second subjects in a context, the CM being configured to enable the plurality of applications to share the first subject but not the second subject, the interface being configured to enable each one of the plurality of applications to set the second subject and to inform the one of the plurality of applications that the second subject has been set; and (b) maintaining values for the second subject separately for the plurality of applications so that the second subject is not shared among the plurality of applications.

Support for the limitation added to claim 1 directed to informing an application that the second subject has been set can be found in Applicant’s specification at, for example, p.11, lines 18-21.

Claim 1 clearly distinguishes over the prior art of record. For example, neither Seliger nor Clark discloses or suggests maintaining values for a second subject separately for a plurality of applications. The Office Action contends that Seliger satisfies this limitation in two passages (i.e., at p. 4, lines 24-28 and p. 14, lines 17-19). This contention is unsupported by the reference.

The passage on p. 14 states that if a context subject has been defined as secure, an application wishing to transact in the subject may require a passcode. This passage does not relate to maintaining values for a second subject separately for a plurality of applications, as it refers to passcodes for authentication and not to values for a context subject.

The passage on p. 4 describes a subject data definition (p.4, lines 18-19). In general, a subject data definition may comprise a data structure which is used to specify a subject's name, a list of applications that can transact in the subject, and whether the subject is secure (p.2, lines 23-30). The passage cited by the Office Action states that a subject data definition may list all of the applications allowed to transact on a particular subject and a passcode for each application, so that the identity of an application desiring to transact on a secure subject can be verified (p. 4, lines 23-28). Like the passage discussed above, this passage relates to passcodes for authentication, and not to values for a context subject. Specifically, this passage states that separate passcodes are maintained for each application allowed to transact on a subject. The passage does not indicate that values for the subject itself are maintained separately for each application. Seliger does not disclose or suggest, in this passage or elsewhere, maintaining values for a second subject separately for a plurality of applications, as recited by claim 1.

As a result, claim 1 patentably distinguishes over the prior art of record, such that the rejection of claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as purportedly being obvious over Seliger in view of Clark should be withdrawn.

Claims 2-14 depend from claim 1 and are allowable for at least the same reasons.

B. Claims 15-28

Claim 15 recites at least one computer readable medium encoded with instructions which,

when executed, perform a method substantially similar to the method of claim 1. For the reasons discussed above with reference to claim 1, claim 15 patentably distinguishes over the prior art of record, such that the rejection of claim 15 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as purportedly being obvious over Seliger in view of Clark should be withdrawn.

Claims 16-28 depend from claim 15 and are allowable for at least the same reasons.

C. Claims 29-41

Claim 29 recites a context manager for use in a computer system comprising a plurality of applications each configured to share at least first and second subjects in a context. The context manager comprises at least one processor programmed to, *inter alia*, maintain values for a second subject separately for a plurality of applications so that the second subject is not shared among the plurality of applications.

It should be appreciated from the discussion above relating to claim 1 that the prior art of record fails to disclose or suggest a context manager comprising at least one processor programmed to maintain values for a second subject separately for a plurality of applications so that the second subject is not shared among the plurality of applications. Accordingly, the rejection of claim 29 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as purportedly being obvious over Seliger in view of Clark should be withdrawn.

Claims 30-41 depend from claim 29 and are allowable for at least the same reasons.

Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) Filed April 14, 2005

During the interview, the Examiner indicated that he never received one of the references (i.e., the “CCOW Tutorial” internet article dated July 25, 2003) cited in the IDS filed April 14, 2005. Applicant believes that this reference was provided with the IDS when filed, but encloses another copy with this response for the Examiner’s convenience.

CONCLUSION

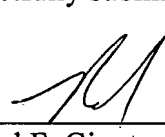
A Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested. The Examiner is requested to call the undersigned at the telephone number listed below if this communication does not place the application in condition for allowance.

If this response is not considered timely filed and if a request for an extension of time is otherwise absent, Applicant hereby requests any necessary extension of time. If there is a fee occasioned by this response, including an extension fee, that is not covered by an enclosed check, please charge any deficiency to Deposit Account No. 23/2825.

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Respectfully submitted,

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